Broad gauge conversion in Tamil Nadu

1932. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether regional imbalance in the conversion of metre gauge into broad gauge in Tamil Nadu still continues despite the efforts taken;

(b) the list of broad gauge conversion works pending in Tamil Nadu, stage of such works and the probable date of completion;

(c) whether it is a fact that the works taken up later are being executed in preference to the works sanctioned earlier; and

(d) what is the background for it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) There is no regional imbalance in taking up gauge conversion in Tamil Nadu.

(b) to (d) Pending projects are considered as those projects which have been included in the budget but clearances are awaited. No such project is pending in Tamil Nadu. However, 7 gauge conversion projects falling partly/fully in Tamil Nadu have been taken up. Work on these projects have also been taken up as per availability of resources and their operational priority. Gauge conversion of Manamadurai-Mandapam (96 kms), Kumbakonam-Mayiladuturai (32 kms), Tiruchchirappalli-Pudukottai (52 kms), Vridhachalam-Attur (83 kms) and Quilon-Punalur (45 kms) sections are targeted for completion during 2005-06. The projects are being progressed as per the availability of funds, keeping in view their operations priority and other considerations.

Introduction of more passenger trains

1933. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would explore the possibilities of introducing more passenger trains on Kaukurgachi Chord line under Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway; and

(b) whether Government would consider linking the circular line with Kaukurgachi Chord line to extend the suburban railway system further to eastern part of Kolkata?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

Rail mishap in Dhanbad Division

1934. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a speeding goods train rammed into a stationary passenger train at a station in Dhanbad Division of East Central Railway on 9th November, 2005;

(b) if so, the number of passengers killed and seriously injured as a result of the mishap;

(c) the amount of *ex-gratia* payment made in respect of those killed and injured;

(d) the cause of accident as established by the inquiry, action taken against the railway employees, if found responsible for the mishap; and

(e) the steps taken to prevent the recurrence of such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As a result of this accident, 9 persons lost their lives, 8 got grievously injured and 18 sustained minor/simple injuries.

(c) *Ex-gratia* relief of Rs. 9.29 lakhs has been paid to the kith and kin of the deceased and to the injured passengers.

(d) No report has been received from the Commissioner of Railway Safety, South Central Circle, who is conducting statutory inquiry into this accident. However, the officials who are *prima facie* responsible for the accident have been placed under suspension.

(e) Safety drive has been launched and monitoring is being done in related areas of train operation.

Privatization of rail-based container transportation

1935. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have finalised any plan or policy for privatization of rail-based container transportation in the country; and